

FUNERAL CUSTOMS are special ceremonies performed after a person dies. Throughout history, humankind has developed such customs to express grief, comfort the living, and honor the dead.

Nearly all religions include the belief that human

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riage.

Funeral customs vary from society to society, but many of the same practices are found throughout the world. These practices include public announcement of the death; preparation of the body; religious ceremonies or other services; a procession; a burial or other form of disposal; and mourning.

Preparation of the Body varies among different peoples. Typically, however, the corpse is laid out and washed. Sometimes it is painted or anointed with oils. It is then dressed in new or special garments or wrapped in a cloth called a *shroud*. In most societies, the body is placed in a coffin, also called a casket, or other container.

Many peoples hold an all-night watch called a *wake* beside the corpse. They may do so in the belief that the wake comforts the spirit of the dead or protects the body from evil spirits. In the past, another reason for a wake was to watch for signs of life. Before modern tests were developed, an unconscious person might be mistaken for dead.

In the United States and Canada, funeral directors preserve most bodies by a process called *embalming*. An embalmer removes the blood and injects a chemical solution into the veins to retard decay. The embalmer also uses cosmetics to restore a more natural appearance to the dead person, who may have been disfigured by a long illness or an accident. Such treatment is common in North America because most bodies are kept several days or more before the funeral. During this period, relatives and friends come to view the body. Embalming is not required by law except in special circumstances, such as if a body is to be transported or stored. In other countries, embalming is rare because most people are buried within a day or two after death.

The Funeral may include prayers, hymns and other music, and speeches called *eulogies* that recall and praise the dead person. In the United States, many funeral services take place at a funeral home with the embalmed body on display. After the service, a special vehicle called a *hearse* carries it in a procession to the cemetery or crematory. A final brief ceremony is held before the body is buried, or cremated in a special furnace. After many funerals, the mourners return with the bereaved family to their house and share food. Later, a tombstone or other monument is erected to record the dead person's life and mark the place of burial.

Burial is the most common method of disposal in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim countries. Human burial developed from the belief that the dead rise again. Like a seed, according to this belief, a body is planted in the earth to await rebirth.

Cremation is customary in Buddhist and Hindu nations and is increasing in the United States and Can-

ada. However, Orthodox Jews, Roman Catholics, and some Protestant groups oppose this practice. They believe the body is the temple of the soul or of the Holy Spirit and should not be destroyed. Other religions do not object to cremation.

Some societies dispose of their dead in other ways. For example, the Sioux Indians of North America place their dead on high platforms. Some groups of Aborigines, the original inhabitants of Australia, leave dead bodies in trees. In Tibet, bodies are sunk in water. The Parsis, a religious group who live mainly in India, take their dead to special enclosures called *towers of silence*. There, birds pick the bones clean. The Parsis believe the earth and fire are sacred and must not be violated by burying or burning a corpse.

Mourning is the expression of grief after a death. People in mourning may deny themselves amusement, avoid certain foods, or wear special clothing. Until the 1940's, Americans and Europeans wore black armbands and hung funeral wreaths on their doors while in mourning. Some societies regard a period of mourning as a time of uncleanness. They believe death contaminates the survivors and makes them *taboo* (set apart as cursed or sacred). See **TABOO**.

History. As early as 60,000 years ago, prehistoric people observed special ceremonies when burying their dead. Neanderthal graves, for example, contain tools, weapons, and evidence of flowers. The ancient Egyptians and other early peoples placed food, jewels, and other goods in tombs. Such provisions showed the belief that a person continued to exist after death and had the same needs as in life. The Egyptians also developed embalming into an advanced technique called *mummification*. They believed the spirit would someday return to inhabit the body. Therefore, it had to be preserved to prevent the soul from perishing.

During the 1900's, traditional funeral and mourning practices have declined in the United States. Ideas concerning death and the treatment of the dead are in a state of change. Criticism of North American funeral practices as needlessly elaborate and expensive has led many people to seek alternatives. For example, some families prefer to hold a memorial service at their home or church.

However, the funeral fills important emotional needs for the living. It focuses attention upon the grief of the survivors and provides a public ceremony that helps them acknowledge and accept their loss. A funeral also helps the survivors express their feelings and discharge their grief.

ROBERT FULTON

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FUNERAL DIRECTOR is a person who prepares the dead for burial or other form of disposition. The funeral director also performs other services at the time of death. A funeral director is also called a *mortician* or an *undertaker*. In some states, a person who is licensed to provide funeral services is called an *embalmer*.

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FUNGI

Responsibilities. An important service of a funeral director is to supervise the embalming of the body for temporary preservation. Embalming is done by removing the blood and body fluids and injecting a preserving fluid into the arteries. Embalming may also include restoring facial features that were disfigured by an accident or prolonged illness.

A funeral director organizes the kind of funeral or other arrangement desired by the family or friends of the dead person. The director obtains a burial permit, notifies relatives and the press, and plans with the clergy for services. Services may be held in the home, a church, or the funeral home, and at the grave or crematory. Services may also be nonreligious.

Most funeral homes have a chapel, a casket-selection room, and a preparation room. A funeral director's equipment may include a hearse, also called a casket coach; a flower car; limousines; and an ambulance.

Funeral directors are in a position to offer experienced and sympathetic advice to the mourners. In some cases, they assist families for several months following the funeral. They may help relatives collect insurance and death benefits from social security, from unions, or from fraternal and veterans' organizations.

History. Throughout history, people in all societies have regarded the disposal of the dead as a solemn act requiring group concern and accompanied by certain ceremonies. Patterns of conduct have developed out of a sense of loss, grief, and mystery caused by death. Religious beliefs and practices have been the most important of these patterns. The funeral director helps people perform ceremonies that follow their beliefs and customs.

By the mid-1800's, the functions performed by a funeral director had become a service occupation in the United States. By 1900, funeral directors were required by law to have certain training and to meet other qualifications.

As a Career. In the United States, about 22,000 funeral homes employ about 65,000 persons. Most funeral directors have both a funeral director's and an embalmer's license or a combination license.

Each state establishes its own licensing requirements, but nearly all the states require a high school diploma. About 25 states require up to two years of college. Every state also requires at least a year of study in funeral-service education, plus an apprenticeship of from six months to three years. The most common apprenticeship is for one year. All applicants for a license must pass a state board examination. The American Board of Funeral Service Education has approved more than 30 funeral-service education schools.

Information about a career in funeral direction may be obtained from the National Funeral Directors Association, 135 W. Wells Street, Milwaukee, Wis. 53203.

Critically reviewed by the NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
See also EMBALMING; FUNERAL CUSTOMS; MUMMY.

FUNGI, FUHN jy, are simple nongreen plants. They lack chlorophyll, the green coloring matter that higher plants use to make food. Fungi have no leaves, roots, or stems. This article discusses only the plants that scientists call *true fungi*. For information about other organisms sometimes grouped among the fungi, see the

WORLD BOOK articles on BACTERIA and SLIME MOLD.

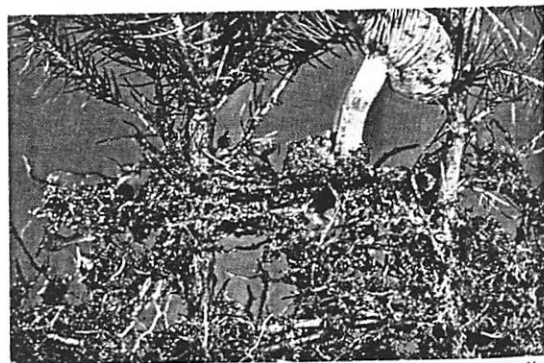
According to *mycologists*, scientists who study fungi, there are more than 100,000 species of these plants. The most common include mildews, molds, and mushrooms.

Parts of a Fungus. Except for yeasts and other one-celled fungi, the main part of a fungus consists of thousands of threadlike cells called *hyphae*. These tiny, branching cells form a tangled mass called a *mycelium*. In many kinds of fungi, the mycelium grows beneath the surface of the material on which the plant is feeding. For example, the mycelium of a mushroom grows underground. The umbrella-shaped growth known as a mushroom is actually the *fruiting body* of the mushroom plant. The fruiting body produces cells called *spores*, which develop into new plants. Spores are smaller and simpler than the seeds of green plants, but they have the same function.

Yeasts and other one-celled fungi are too small to be seen without a microscope. However, the fruiting bodies of many fungi can be seen with the unaided eye, and the largest of these structures measure more than 3 feet (91 centimeters) in diameter.

How a Fungus Lives. Fungi live almost everywhere in the soil, water, and air. Some fungi are parasites that feed on living plants and animals. Others, called *saprophytes*, live on decaying matter. Still other fungi live together with other plants in ways that benefit both organisms. Such a relationship is called *symbiosis*. For example, a fungus and a simple plant called an *alga* may live together symbiotically. They form a plant called a *lichen* (see LICHEN). Some fungi also live on the roots of higher plants in a symbiotic relationship known as a *mycorrhiza*. The fungus gets moisture and carbohydrates from the green plant. In return, the fungus helps supply the green plant with nitrogen and such essential minerals as phosphorus and zinc. Many species of trees, shrubs, and herbs have mycorrhizas.

Fungi cannot produce their own food because they do not contain chlorophyll. They must take carbohydrates, proteins, and other nutrients from the animals, plants, or decaying matter on which they live. Fungi discharge chemicals called *enzymes* into the material on which they feed. The enzymes break down complex carbohydrates and proteins into simple compounds that the hyphae can absorb.



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Some Kinds of Fungi live on the roots of green plants in relationships called *mycorrhizas*, which benefit both species. In the example shown above, the white threadlike hyphae of a mushroom grow together with the roots of Norway spruce trees.